One of the most stimulating philosophers of the last century is discussed by a modern German philosopher living in Tokyo.

NIETZSCHE AND OUR TIMES

By ROBERT SCHINZINGER

THE question of survival or nonsurvival has perhaps never loomed so large as today. If, in the face of a tormented Europe, we draw attention to the fact that October 15, 1944, was the hundredth anniversary of Friedrich Nietzsche's birth, we do so because this "good European," though a true son of his own, the nineteenth century, did not acquire his real significance and influence until our twentieth century.

Like Janus, Nietzsche's philosophy has two faces: one turned back, with an exquisite feeling for historical reality, with a keen, pitiless eye for all symptoms of decadence and decline; the other face turned forward, with a profound faith in life and a courageous determination to master the future. It is this antinomy in Nietzsche's nature which makes him appear so related to our own age, in which realism and idealism, skepticism and heroism, are linked in a strange union. The spiritual situation of Europe which, in spite of the horrors of two world wars and the chaos of the intervening period, has retained the will to live, the will to master its future, is well represented by Nietzsche, who traversed the bottomless pits of Schopenhauer's pessimism and fought his way through to a philosophy filled with a will toward life and the future. Pain and suffering led the philosopher to his ultimate depths and produced a renewed faith, a new love of life which has nothing in common with rose-tinted idealism or a naïve optimism based on a belief in progress. Nietzsche characterizes his "new humanity" as the feeling a warrior has on the evening of the battle which has decided nothing and brought him only wounds and the loss of his friend—the feeling of this warrior, who on the following morning, in spite of all this, still salutes the dawn and his own fortune.

INTERPRETATION AND MISINTERPRETATION

There have been three waves of Nietzsche's influence: *fin de siècle*, the period before the Great War, and the period between the two world wars. Each of these periods took from Nietzsche that which conformed to its own spirit.

The weary maturity of civilization at the end of the nineteenth century, which has been called the *fin de siècle*, found in the magic of art that which other centuries had sought for and found in religion. The passionate frenzy of what was then the younger generation sensed a deep, mysterious relationship between Baudelaire's poetry, Wagner's music, and Nietzsche's philosophy. As a pupil of Schopenhauer, the young Nietzsche was convinced that life only had a meaning if it produced great men, artists, philosophers, and saints, who were able to scorn life. The masses who, like ants, assiduously believed in the progress and happiness of mankind, were what Schopenhauer called the "factory goods of nature"; Nietzsche, in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, drew them as the "last men":

> The time will come when man no longer casts the arrow of his longing beyond man. . . . Then the earth will have grown small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is ineradicable like the sand flea. . . . "We have invented happiness," say the last men and blink their eyes. They have left the regions where it was hard to live: for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs shoulders with him: for one needs warmth. . . . No herdsman but a herd! Each has the same desires, all are equal: he who feels differently voluntarily goes to the madhouse.

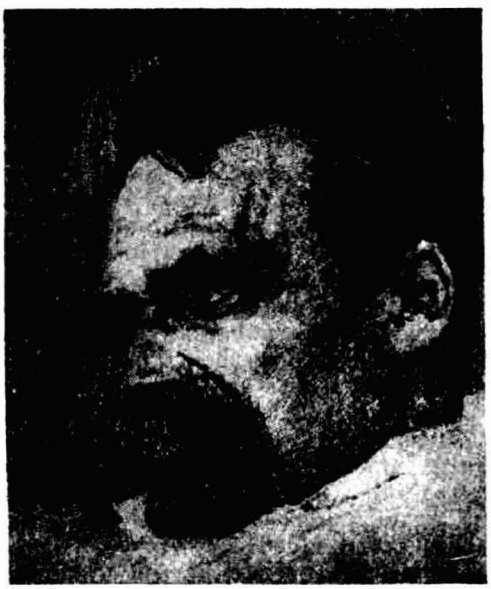
Life was only truly worth living if it proudly rose above itself. Art and philosophy were means toward such self-liberation, were means of escaping the iron ring of necessity. This is the atmosphere in which the young Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* and his *Thoughts Out of Season*. Richard Wagner was for him at that time the prophet of a new Dionysian art. He confessed that when listening to this music he felt as if he had reached the most blissful state of nirvana, with all his former life lying far behind him like a distant mist.

The romanticism of the nineteenth century had reached its peak, and all that Nietzsche taught as "*amor fati*," "*will to power*," and "superman" was interpreted, or misinterpreted, in this sense of exquisite aestheticism. Beyond good and evil, the artistic genius enjoyed the mature beauty of decadence, with an indifferent "*après nous le déluge.*" This was the very opposite of what Nietzsche really meant.

The second wave of Nietzsche interpretation gave expression to the naturalistic trend of the period before the Great War. In the evolution from ape to man, the superman was the next step. What was entirely overlooked was Nietzsche's moral conclusion: that man would one day cause merriment and shame to the superman, just as the ape now offers a ridiculous and at the same time embarrassing sight to man. Nietzsche's fight against Christianity and Christian morals, as well as his doctrine of the will to power were accepted literally during that phase of naked, naïve naturalism. Only his demand for a brutal, healthy egoism was seen, not his fine distinction between common and lofty morality. There were not a few Nietzsche followers who believed themselves to be supermen once they had absolved themselves of all responsibility. They did not grasp that the superman is distinguished by superhuman responsibilities and duties. That Nietzsche had broken the old tables of moral values to set up a new, more honest and sounder ethical attitude in place of the old malice and hypocrisy, and how bitterly he condemned those materialistic trends of his time and the somewhat overbearing attitude of his own country and countrymen—all this was either not noticed or not taken seriously. The academic philosophy, on the other hand, was inclined to regard Nietzsche more as a highly imaginative thinker and dangerous author than as a philosopher.

THE THIRD WAVE

The third wave of interpretation came after the Great War. A new generation, which had passed through the experience of war, utterly disillusioned and yet filled with the desire for a new start, found itself in the very situation Nietzsche had felt coming. The bankruptcy of the old idols and values had become apparent. Christianity, although generally accepted, had not been able to prevent the world conflagration of Christian peoples. Something was fundamentally wrong, and the history of the last thousand years looked suspiciously like the "rise of nihilism" as Nietzsche had described it. To conquer this nihilism was felt by the new generation to be its moral and political duty. People became sensitive and distrustful toward great words and gestures on the part of all isms which were unable either to foresee or prevent the great catastrophe. The demand was raised for a philosophy which could stand the test of the most sophisticated skepticism, which was ruthless in unmasking, pitiless in its striving for truth, and which at the same time



Friedrich Nietzsche in 1899

opened up a new vision into the future. What was wanted was a philosophy which did not idealize the nature of man and yet led him beyond himself. Nietzsche was interpreted in the words of his *Zarathustra*:

> The superman is the meaning of earth. Let your will say: the superman be the meaning of earth! I adjure you, my brethren, remain faithful to earth and do not believe those who speak unto you of superterrestrial hopes! Poisoners they are, whether they know it or not.

The new generation was looking for a philosophy which had man as its central point and at the same time turned the gaze inward toward the depths of the human soul, a philosophy filled with life and thoroughly human. And this was the path shown by Nietzsche, whose philosophy, to use the words of a Frenchman, gave expression to a "*puissant besoin moderne.*" This

new need, felt everywhere in Europe, sought for forces impervious to the most ingenious psychology and skepsis, forces enabling one to endure and master life. People all over Europe are seeking for contact with the very reality of life. Philosophers and authors are tiring of the abstract intellect and are seeking like Antaeus to gain strength from the soil. It was this trend that gave to philosophy a new life impulse, a new realistic tone and a sober concentration on the one question of modern philosophy: what is man?

THE PROS AND CONS OF HISTORY

Nietzsche, who began as a classical philologist, was early to realize the value and danger of historical knowledge. Only history can teach what man is. Only he who knows the past and the true forces of historical reality is able to affect the future according to his plans. Only from history do we learn what true human greatness is. If, as Schopenhauer says, the meaning of history is to produce great men, then this stimulating aspect may well represent the greatest value of historical knowledge. On the other hand, the feeling for history leads to everything of the past being loved simply because it is of the past; this aesthetic indulgence spoils the taste for what is new and for the things that are to come. To sit back and observe the vast spectacle of history is fascinating and at the same time paralyzing. Those who have learned to see things from all sides lose the naïve one-sidedness of action and fall victim to a Hamlet-like indecision.

Nietzsche conquers the danger of historicism and relativism by following them to their logical conclusion and pushing suspicion and skepticism to their extremes. This leads him to the conviction that the Christian and Buddhist cultures of the last two thousand years have been heading toward nihilism. The task now facing man is to drive this nihilism to its extreme and thus to its conquest. "That which desires to fall should be pushed," but the place of that which has fallen must be taken by something new and positive. Nietzsche seeks for a philosophy regarding the past and the future in one, combining an incorruptible eye for historical reality with a dauntless will toward the future. From the moral point of view: he feels himself to be a man looking back on thousands of years, but also looking forward to thousands of years. He feels himself to be the heir to the most lofty spirit of the past and at the same time the first ancestor of a new aristocracy. And this is the characteristic of the philosophy of the twentieth century: that it sees through the historical nature of all phenomena of human life and yet finds the courage to make a radically new beginning.

LIFE AND KNOWLEDGE

Of course, not all philosophers of our time have made history their chief subject. There is one section following the old idealistic tradition and studying the relationship between pure mathematics and logic (Couturat and Russell) or the logical foundations of the natural sciences (the Marburg school, Poincaré). The other section, which regards the problem of history as the fundamental problem of human existence and knowledge, can in turn be divided into three groups. The first of these champions a "philosophy of values" (Rickert, Münsterberg), the second the ideas of neo-Hegelianism (Gentile, Glockner). This second, but to an even greater degree the third group, is decisively influenced by Nietzsche and sees in the historical factor of human life its essentially metaphysical character. A new kind of metaphysics in the form of a philosophy of life or a philosophy of human existence is arising especially in Germany (Dilthey, Heidegger, Jaspers). The fact that knowledge, too, is in some way a function of life and not something abstract floating in a vacuum is no longer interpreted in the manner of narrow naturalism (as James still does); the historical orientation has resulted in a widened horizon. What is important is that this new ontological realism does not destroy the truth value and the logical integrity of knowledge.

Even from Nietzsche's relativistic point of view, to regard knowledge as a function of life does not mean to deny the value of truth. Here, too, he arrives at something positive by following the negative point of view of relativism to its logical conclusion. It is possible that knowledge originally arose from the competition of fallacies, among which the more useful or more comfortable ones or those with the older tradition survived. Finally, however, truth evolved as the most useful fallacy. The urge toward truth gradually gained the upper hand over the fallacies because it was better suited for serving the purposes of life.

TRUTH AND FALLACY

Strictly scientific philosophical idealism teaches that the human mind formulates models and hypotheses whose consequences must coincide with our experiences. The experiment is a means of discovering this coincidence. If phenomena occur one day which cannot be explained by our "laws of nature," we must change our hypotheses.

Starting from another angle, Nietzsche arrives at the conviction that it is senseless to speak of absolutely true or absolutely false knowledge: there are only probabilities. There is no neutral authority to decide over the absolute truth or fallacy of our knowledge. Our only criterion is the conclusiveness of our knowledge and its fruitfulness in practical experience. Mathematics, Nietzsche says in his paradoxical manner, deal with exact figures (straight lines, circles, etc.) which are not to be found in that form anywhere in our actual experience; hence mathematics are based on "productive fallacies." According to Nietzsche, logic also arose from the fallacy that there are identical things. Moreover, it is essentially optimistic in so far as it arbitrarily assumes that our human thinking, by following its own (logical) laws, must hit upon the truth of reality. By pushing this sophistic skepsis to its extreme, he can say that truth is that measure of fallacy without which life cannot exist. But by pushing the relativity of truth to its extreme he also proves the relativity of fallacy, and all that remains is probability; i.e., a sentence may be regarded as true or as highly probable if it proves itself fruitful in the reality of life. But what does this mean? It means that because of its ontological nature the true conception must necessarily prove fruitful and victorious in competition with the false conception. Nietzsche did not say this in so many words, but it is the implied logical consequence.

RELIGION AND METAPHYSICS

One of the most difficult problems Nietzsche had to deal with was that, on the one hand, he characterized religion and metaphysics as fallacies and, on the other hand, realized that mankind cannot live without such fallacies. Without them no individual would want to plant trees bearing fruit in the remote future. So here, too, we have productive fallacies. At the end of the racing track the chariot must turn back again. At the extreme of modern skepsis one must return to religion and metaphysics. That is the idea of the circle. Nietzsche wrote his *Zarathustra* as metaphysics which are not metaphysics, and as a religion which is not a religion. What he calls "*amor fati*" and the "eternal recurrence of the same" is the expression of this new attitude.

Like all classical German philosophers, writers, and poets, Nietzsche sees in the early periods of Greek culture the finest flowering of humanity. His criticism of culture is even more radical than Rousseau's: with Socrates begins the decline, in Christianity nihilism is enhanced, and in modern times the crisis has been reached. Now it is a matter of returning again to the simplicity of the Greeks, who were so close to life and reality.

Just as any follower of a doctrine prefers to be attacked rather than tacitly ignored, so all fervent Christians of our times have learned from Nietzsche's polemic. They feel that Nietzsche's attack was directed less against Christ than against Christianity as a phenomenon of history, especially against the Church, which had for so long been used to keeping the mills of the state going that it had become estranged to its real tasks. Moreover, Nietzsche never denied how much he owed to his religious education. "One must have loved religion and art like one's mother and nurse—else one cannot grow wise."

In Nietzsche the religious crisis of our day has reached its climax, and this to many already means the transition to a "theology of the crisis." Above all, however, the new generation feels that Nietzsche, by destroying historical religion, has so to speak uncovered the religious roots of mankind.

THE WORK AS A WHOLE

Naturally the three waves of Nietzsche interpretation we have mentioned correspond to a certain inner development in Nietzsche's thinking. But it would be wrong to regard the transitions from the romanticism of early works to the skeptical relativism of the aphoristical works and from this to the prophetical attitude of *Zarathustra* as desultory and unconnected. To understand Nietzsche means to understand the necessity for Nietzsche to discover and overcome nihilism in himself, to understand that he had to combat Schopenhauer's philosophy and Wagner's music as being the most sublime forms of a self-liberation which was purely negative, flight from reality, a

symptom of decadence. The new self-liberation of Nietzsche, however, represents a heroic effort to accept the iron ring of necessity and to include fate into our will. Hence what he later acknowledged of his earlier writings was his realization of how the ancient Greek spirit conquered pessimism, how the Greek tragedy celebrated an apotheosis of life over the chasm of existence.

Before he could proclaim his new philosophy of life he had to wage war upon those forces standing in his way. Nietzsche, the amoralist, antichrist, and relativist, is driven by a fanatical love of truth, by an "intellectual integrity" which forces him to push his skepticism to extremes and leave no stone unturned when it is a matter of revealing the rotten foundations of modern culture. The romantic pessimism bears fruit and destroys itself, and the moral impulse of intellectual integrity discovers a new, unshakable foundation in life itself and its evolutionary tendency. Here lie the roots of a new morality and new metaphysics, but they cannot be "made" artificially. What has been called Nietzsche's positivistic phase is the necessary connecting link between negation of life and affirmation of life. He knows that moral values do not become worthless by the fact that we realize that such natural motives as fear, vanity, egoism, or lust for power have brought men to acknowledge those moral values. Whatever may have been the psychological reasons for acknowledging a moral value, the value itself, the

> virtue achieved, by dint of the pure air it lets us breathe and the spiritual feeling of well-being it communicates, constantly ennobles the motives of our actions, and later we no longer carry out the same actions from the same coarser motives which formerly impelled us.

The "new humanity" Nietzsche teaches, his new tables of values, i.e., his new conception of man, is proclaimed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He lacks the words and terms to indicate the new; hence he speaks prophetically in allegories and poetical images. There is no doubt that his new doctrine caused a great deal of confusion, and perhaps not without his intention. He has a good measure of Socratic irony, and there were also not a few who would have liked nothing better than to poison him. The new light he kindled was to be a beacon for straying mariners on the ocean of doubt, but a will-o'-the-wisp for those who felt safe in the possession of absolute truth.

All in all it is less the concrete content of his philosophy than his ethical aspect and his basic attitude toward life and reality which have exerted such a decisive influence on the philosophy of the twentieth century. Even in France, where the traditional Cartesian dualism is still in fashion and where Nietzsche's philosophy is regarded as mysticism and German monism, even there Nietzsche the moralist is greatly admired (Th. Maulnier). The superman and eternal recurrence are interpreted as an ethical appeal, as a cosmological vision intended to raise man above himself (Andler). Although Bergson, before his death, reverted to Catholicism, his philosophy of the *élan vital* once had so world-wide an effect because it followed the course taken by Nietzsche.

Nietzsche, who wrote his philosophy in aphorisms, did not have the ambition of building up a system. On the contrary: according to Nietzsche, the will to evolve a system is the will to lie. The fundamental spiritual attitude of "intellectual integrity" makes it impossible to force facts into the straitjacket of a system. But several central ideas can be established:

(1) Nietzsche objects just as much to the separation of appearance and the thing-in-itself, of semblance and essence, as he does to the belief in a transcendental god.

(2) Life and reality have their value in themselves and have as a common characteristic a sort of family resemblance, the "will to power," i.e., power, fullness, force, and richness of life. Knowledge as well as morality arose in the service of this will to power.

(3) Since there is no transcendental goal outside the earth, all existence is in the form of a circle; the end returns to the beginning. There is no means of escape from this circle of necessity. (Eternal recurrence of the same.)

(4) Applied to man, this means that the will which is still opposed to reality and fate has not yet reached its most profound point. Only the heroic decision to say "Aye" to the iron ring of necessity and to accept fate achieves the highest form of human existence in the "*amor fati*." Nietzsche draws a distinction between this *amor fati* and that which he calls Turkish fatalism, which resigns itself to the opposition of will and fate. *Amor fati* is to experience the identity of will and fate.

(5) Since there is no transcendental god and no transcendental goal, man must look for the goal of his existence in himself. This is the meaning of what Nietzsche calls the superman. All human relations are now given their meaning by this new goal of an evolution of human existence.

(6) The table of new values erected by Nietzsche is no casuistic morality of laws. There are only the two supreme principles of powerful and noble existence. He knows of only one moral difference, that between common and noble morality. Pity is rejected because it shames him to whom we show pity. Love is rejected if it originates in weakness. It is replaced by "bountiful virtue," which originates in strength. It is like the setting sun, which gilds everything it touches and is not content until even the poorest boatman rows with golden oars.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

All Nietzsche's intellectual efforts culminate in the duality of possibilities of decline and the necessity of a new rise, in other words, in visions of a total catastrophe of culture and the vision of a new humanity. Either the "last men" or the "superman" will be the masters of the earth; but Nietzsche knows that master men and the men of the herd are this only in relation to each other. Exceptions are only possible as such if there is a dominating rule. Hence the little men must be given courage to be what they are.

Nietzsche's political visions of the future show the same dual nature. In its essence, the state is a culture-forming force, but in its decline it can have a destructive influence on culture. In the same way, war may produce creative powers or be the hibernation of culture. Sixty years ago Nietzsche saw the classic period of wars approaching, of wars more terrible than ever before. He foresaw that England must lose in importance; for "nowadays one must be a soldier if one wants to have credit as a merchant." America, he thought, was generally overrated, but in Russia he perceived new, unsuspected forces. These might become a threat to Europe, but this very fact would force old Europe to rise up, to strengthen the will toward *one* Europe. The "good European," representing the sum total of the strong forces of the old European culture, will perforce evolve. Nietzsche is modern enough to know that it does not suffice to set up an ideal image of man; man must be placed in such conditions of existence that only the desired type will be able to survive.

Grand Politics is a historical study looking into the future. On the one hand it is impelled by contempt for the present type of man: "My humanity is not to love mankind but to endure it." On the other hand, it is determined by anxiety for the future. It does not offer any concrete goals, as these latter only emerge from the actual concrete situation. It aims at a new morality, a new attitude. The educational reforms he proposed in his youth were aimed at educating superior men as an elite of culture, while the masses were to receive their education from the unconscious but hearty food of tradition. His new idea of education, however, is that of discipline and breeding, by which means the biological, economic and, above all, spiritual conditions for a leading class are to be prepared. "I write for a race of men which does not yet exist."

The great philosopher Aristippus came to the court of Dionysius, the Tyrant of Syracuse, and showed himself quite prepared to follow the customs and manners of the court.

"I would like to know," the Tyrant said rudely, "why the philosophers come so often to the rulers and the rulers so seldom to the philosophers."

"Because," Aristippus answered, "the philosophers know exactly what the rulers need, but the rulers don't."